

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 920

By DuBois

A RESOLUTION to congratulate the administration, faculty, staff, and residents of The King's Daughters' School Center for Autism upon the occasion of the dedication of their new building.

WHEREAS, over the years the local schools and hospitals of this State have meant a great deal to their respective communities; in earlier periods of our history, they were often established through the efforts and resources of the local citizenry or by churches; and

WHEREAS, the King's Daughters and Sons is an international and interdenominational group of Christians organized to serve "In His Name." In 1912, the group built and operated the first hospital in Maury County, located in Columbia, which was the only hospital in the county until Maury County Hospital was completed in 1954; and

WHEREAS, after the closure of the hospital and in order to continue serving the community, the King's Daughters and Sons founded The King's Daughters' School in September of 1955 as a private non-profit residential program for individuals with mental retardation; the school, which has now served children for more than fifty years, is based on the philosophy that people with mental challenges should not be isolated from society, but allowed to function and be afforded rights and opportunities like every citizen; and

WHEREAS, the King's Daughters' School (KDS) Center for Autism is a separate campus of The King's Daughters' School, located at 900 Trotwood Avenue in Columbia, in a building that previously housed the Central Christian Church; the KDS Center for Autism currently houses twelve autistic students from across Tennessee and the United States, and is the only residential autism program in Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, autism is a developmental disability marked by communication, sensory, and social challenges, and the KDS Center serves children with more severe forms of the disorder, such as those who cannot talk and have problems bathing, feeding, toileting, and

clothing themselves. Autism is a growing concern across the United States, where its frequency is increasing at a rate of up to 17 percent every year, affecting one in every 166 children; Tennessee is home to more than 8,000 autistic children; and

WHEREAS, the opening of the KDS Center for Autism marks the beginning of the 51st year of service of The King's Daughters' School, which has been able to grow and serve such special individuals because of the overwhelming generosity and support of their friends and neighbors in the community; in the last five years, the number of autistic students they were asked to serve increased tremendously, and the Board of Directors took a leap of faith in deciding that the unique challenges of severely autistic children predicated the need for their own, unique program; and

WHEREAS, while the KDS Center opened its doors on January 2, 2006, the official dedication is set for April 21, 2006, with special "open house" events to be held on April 20 and 21; the dedication was planned for April in order to avoid winter weather, to allow the residents a chance to settle into their new home and become familiar with their surroundings, and to coincide with National Autism Awareness Month; and

WHEREAS, the dedication will include tours of the new facilities, remarks from several individuals who wish to express appreciation to the many friends and community members who have supported and encouraged the creation of the new KDS Center, and a formal dedication of the facility; and

WHEREAS, the KDS Center for Autism will serve students who are between the ages of seven and twenty-two and have a primary diagnosis of autism; the Center will provide a holistic, highly structured environment where children with autism will receive individualized attention to learn to communicate, master self-help skills, and manage behavioral, sensory, and transitioning challenges; and

WHEREAS, the KDS Center for Autism has a capacity for twenty residential children, and an additional three day students. The program is intentionally kept small due to the unique challenges posed by autistic children, for whom the establishment of a strict routine that keeps life orderly and predictable is critical; as the only program of its kind in Tennessee, students benefit from intensive, one-on-one teaching and training, and while they do not "get better," they

can live happy, healthy lives by learning to reduce some of the challenges associated with their disability; and

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly wish to seize this opportunity to specially recognize all those involved in the opening and dedication of The King's Daughters' School Center for Autism; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we highly praise and commend the administration, faculty, and staff of The King's Daughters' School Center for Autism in Columbia for their devoted service to the educational and life skills training needs of persons with developmental disabilities, express our warmest wishes to the residents, and extend sincere congratulations to everyone at the new Center upon the occasion of the dedication of their new building at 900 Trotwood Avenue.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our confidence that The King's Daughters' School Center for Autism will serve the community and its residents for years to come, and achieve consummate success in its pursuit to equip each child with the practical living skills that will enable him or her to live more independently, happily, and safely in a less restrictive environment.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.